

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:13-14

Psalm 111

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58

*The Homiletical Question: What does the Holy Spirit want the People of God to understand from these readings on this occasion?*

“You are what you eat.” So goes the saying usually taken to be an exhortation to following a healthy, nutritious diet. It may be surprising to hear that it is not new, but a variation on a saying that appeared in 1825 in a book by a French jurist and politician by the name of Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste: Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. There the saying appeared as “Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.” In making the statement the Frenchman was not issuing a manifesto about healthy eating, but instead indicating the strong link in human cultures between food and identity. If you have watched any of the late Anthony Bourdain’s *Parts Unknown* or any of the Saturday afternoon cooking shows on PBS, shows like Joanne Weir’s *Plates and Places*, or *Lidia’s Kitchen*, or *Simply Ming*, you know what I mean. Food and cultural identity are invariably linked.

The gospel’s injunction to “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood” that you may have life reflects some sixty years of diverse Christian communities gathering to celebrate Eucharist. But it would be a mistake to see this simply as an injunction to engage in the sacramental practice of Eucharistic communion. It is much more than that. Just as food is related to culture and identity, Christ’s presence in Holy Communion is mediated in order to form us, to shape our individual identities, and to sustain us as we support one another in the struggles that life inevitably throws our way. If we are to be channels of God’s peace, as the song says, we need something to nurture our lives so we can do this for one another.

Jesus is no longer present to us in bodily form. But if resurrection and Easter life mean anything, it means that the Divine Presence perdures in ways that may be mysterious but are nonetheless real and ordained by God to sustain us.

The Divine Presence *can* be discerned in creation and in nature as the primordial sacrament revealing God's love and creative power. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," as Gerard Manley Hopkins writes. Anyone taken by the beauty of the world and the complexity of the natural order can attest to this. Though obscured by the smoke of the wildfires burning in the West, flowers blanket the hills on the Mesa and the fall foliage we will soon be able to see should fill us with a kind of reverential awe. Then too, our pets large and small constantly bless us with their companionship and their unconditional love.

God's presence in Christ *can* be discerned in the words of scripture if they are read meditatively and carefully as the Spirit of God seeks to address us there as we respond to the life situations in which we may find ourselves. One word, one phrase can engender a possible answer to a dilemma; provide insight, comfort and strength during a time of need. As the Prayer Book says, we have only to "read, mark, and inwardly digest" what is revealed about God's care for us.

The presence of God *can* be found in other people as they touch our lives with care and compassion, helping us to bear one another's burdens. Often this is done inadvertently without their knowing it by a simple ministry of presence. Haven't we missed the sanctity of visiting with one another in coffee hour over the past year and a half? Don't our hearts tell us that there was always more to sitting with one another, hearing about the events in each other's lives on a weekly basis, than just merely another opportunity to socialize?

Often welling up spontaneously and unexpectedly, the Divine Presence *can* be experienced in the heartfelt longing found in prayer—and even in our struggles and grief—though this presence is often recognized as a gift only in hindsight. Looking back on my own life, I have grown more as a result of the challenges and,

yes, even the pains that I have experienced than I have from the times when things have been relatively easy and without hardship.

The operative word here is “can.” Though God *can* do whatever God wants at any time God wants, we have the freedom to cooperate with God’s grace with discerning hearts by seeking the Holy One through attention to God’s presence in the everyday moments of life. Distracted by many things, we are very often tough nuts to crack. “Like a weaned child on its mother’s breast, so is my soul within me,” the psalmist reminds us (Psalm 131). God is more than willing to feed us; to shape our identity that we may become channels, sacraments, of God’s presence in our world. But the food is offered, not forced. Our other readings this morning indicate the desire for wisdom. Here is true wisdom; let us attend to it with hearts hungry for the spiritual food available to us.

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